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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to review recent trends in the rural and/or nonmetropolitan population and to indicate some of the linkages and implications for national population policy. The vast rural to urban migration of the last generation was necessary and rational, since most migrants believed they benefitted by moving. Although much of the movement was impelled by declining farm and mining employment, it also stemmed from comparatively high rural fertility and the resulting pressures on local job supply. Rural fertility hascontributed disproportionately to U.S. total population growth and requires more attention in family planning programs if national population limitation objectives are to be attained. (FF)

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# Rural and Nonmetropolitan Population Trends of Significance to National Population Policy

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## Abstract

About a fourth of the American population is rural -- living in the open country or in towns of less than 2,500 inhabitants. If one adds to this the towns of up to 50,000 people but excludes rural people in the environs of large cities, the nonmetropolitan population is about thirty percent of the total. There is great diversity in the structure and trends of rural and/or nonmetropolitan populations in the United States. Some of these areas are still in the midst of agricultural adjustments that are producing partial depopulation and contributing to urban congestion through a steady stream of outmigration. Others are absorbing the equivalent of their natural population increase and have natural and economic advantages for development.

The vast rural to urban migration of the last generation has been necessary and rational. Most migrants believe they have benefitted themselves by moving. Although much of the movement has been impelled by declining farm and coal mining employment, much of it has stemmed from comparatively high rural fertility and the resulting pressures on local job supply. Rural fertility has contributed disproportionately to U.S. total population growth and requires more attention in family planning programs if national population limitation objectives are to be attained.

Both rural and urban areas have advantages and disadvantages for quality of life. The Nation will continue to be predominantly urban, but more of its people express a desire for rural or small town residence than presently live in such places.

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# Rural and Nonmetropolitan Population Trends of Significance to National Population Policy

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and the American Future

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# Rural and Nonmetropolitan Population Trends of Significance to National Population Policy

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Cities are the sink of the human race.--Rousseau.

I have no relish for the country; it is a kind of healthy grave.--Sydney Smith.

Conflicting opinions on the relative merits of urban and rural life have been with us for a long time. One could as readily cite examples from 2,000 years ago as those above. But until the modern era neither agricultural nor industrial technology permitted the majority of mankind to live in cities. The demographic history of the United States has been dominated by the steady decline in the proportion of people required in agriculture and the concurrent rise of the cities. Today the release of workers from farming is comparatively completed, the direct economic dependence of most rural people is nonagricultural, and we have both the need and the freedom to consider what the role of rural areas should be in the future distribution of population. The purpose of this paper is to review recent trends in the rural and/or nonmetropolitan population and to indicate some of the linkages and implications for national population policy.

Recent rural trends.--The rural population is defined in the Census to consist of open country residents and people in towns of up to 2,500 inhabitants. On this basis, the rural population numbered 53.9 million in 1970, or 26.5 percent of the total population. The rural total has

been essentially stationary for several decades, but with much internal redistribution as major agricultural areas have been partly depopulated while in other places rural people have increased from nonagricultural development.

In recent years, the metropolitan-nonmetropolitan concept has come into increasing use and has partly displaced the urban-rural classification. Metropolitan areas are defined around all contiguous urban aggregations of 50,000 or more people. They consist of entire counties (except in New England where towns are used) and may include counties adjacent to that containing the central city if certain criteria of metropolitan character and commuting integration are met. The result is a concept that acknowledges the linkage and ready access that nearby areas have with the economy and facilities of a metro city. It also implicitly asserts the quasi-rural character that nonmetro-sized cities have and groups them with the rural areas that lie beyond effective commuting range of the metro centers.

The exact metro-nonmetro division of the population in the 1970 Census is not yet known, for the intercounty commuting data are not yet available. Without such data the nonmetro population stands at about 59 million and will lose about 1 million when the commuting data are applied. Thus the nonmetro areas -- which exclude metro rural residents but include small cities -- have about 58 million people, or 29 percent of the total. The population of nonmetro areas shows some overall growth from 1960-70 (6.7 percent), but in the process of growth some nonmetro areas have become metropolitan.

The lack of growth in rural population and comparative lack of it in nonmetro communities has been associated primarily with the decline in farm people. Farm population reached its peak in the U.S. in 1916, at about 32.5 million. By 1940, there were still more than 30 million people on farms, but since then outmovement from farms has been rapid and there are now (1971) only 9.4 million farm residents. The decline has still not ended, but with the present level being hardly 3/10 what it was in 1940, there is relatively little further drop possible.

The decreases in farm population were made possible by the swift evolution of agricultural technology that has both provided higher yields of products per acre and required less manpower per acre. The release of manpower from farming has been accentuated by the comparatively high birth rates of farm families and by the consistently higher levels of income available for most farm people in nonagricultural work. The trend is not confined to the United States or to any one political system. It tends to affect all classes of nations.

Aside from the decline in farm employment, the drop in coal mining jobs has probably been the next more important source of rural population loss. Coal mining has been predominantly a nonmetropolitan activity, and in the Southern Appalachians has been highly rural. Coal production workers decreased from 845,000 in 1940 to about 130,000 in 1971.

From 1960-70, there was a net of 2.2 million outmigration of people from nonmetro areas to metro areas. This is a sizeable number of people and contributed to the growth of urban population not only from the direct migration but through the subsequent addition of children born to the

Population change and net migration in the United States by race and metropolitan status, 1960-70

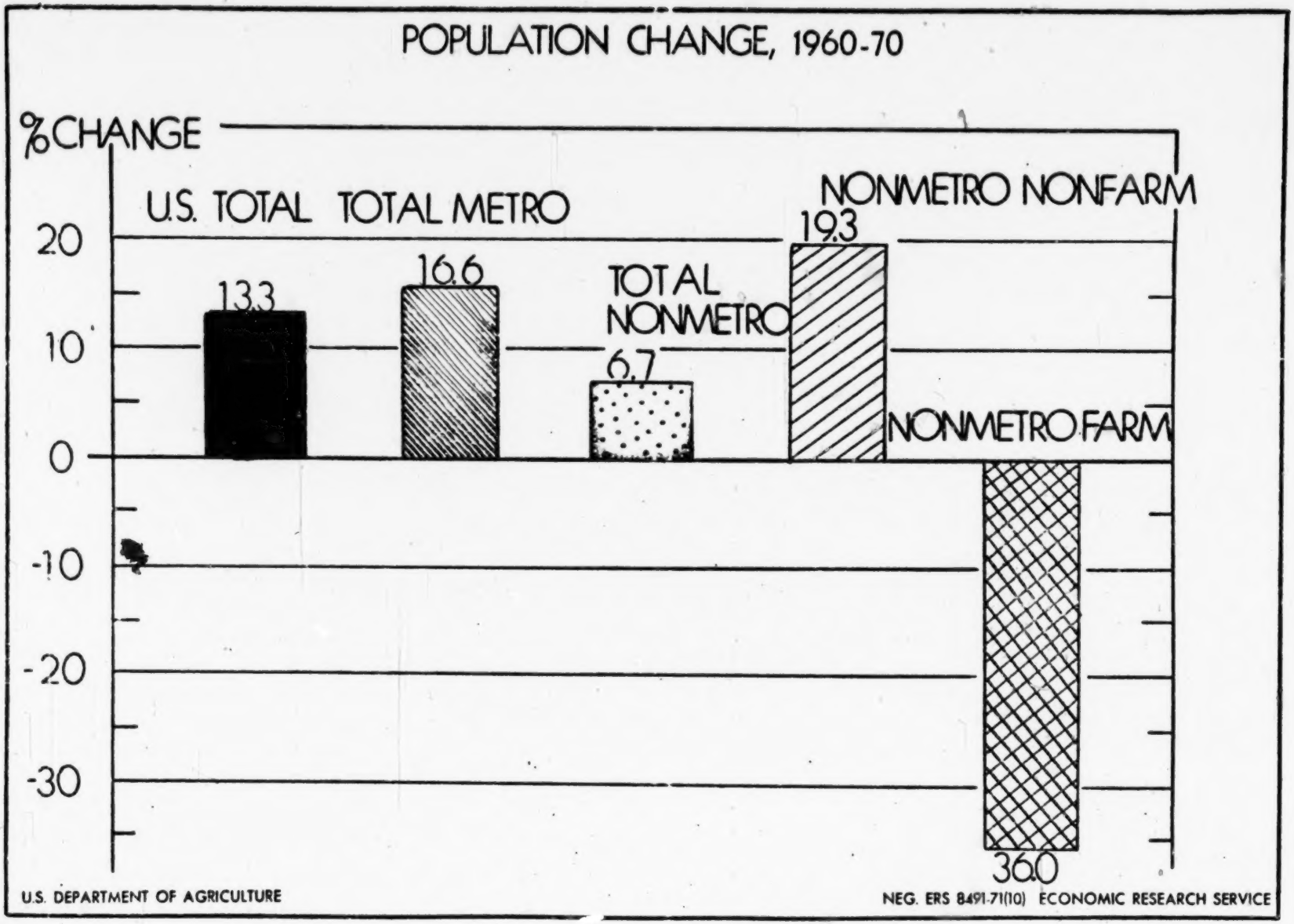
| Race and residence | Population | | Percentage change, 1960-70 | Net migration | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Amount | | Rate 1/ | |
| | 1970 | 1960 | | 1960-70 | 1950-60 | 1960-70 | 1950-60 |
| | Mil. | Mil. | Pct. | Mil. | Mil. | Pct. | Pct. |
| United States | 203.2 | 179.3 | 13.3 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 1.7 | 1.8 |
| Metropolitan 2/ | 138.9 | 119.1 | 16.6 | 5.2 | 8.1 | 4.4 | 9.0 |
| Nonmetropolitan | 64.3 | 60.2 | 6.8 | -2.2 | -5.5 | -3.6 | -8.9 |
| White | 177.6 | 158.8 | 11.8 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 1.4 | 2.0 |
| Metropolitan 2/ | 120.1 | 105.4 | 13.9 | 3.1 | 6.5 | 2.9 | 8.0 |
| Nonmetropolitan | 57.6 | 53.4 | 7.8 | -.8 | -3.8 | -1.4 | -7.1 |
| Negro and other races | 25.6 | 20.5 | 24.7 | .7 | 3/ | 3.5 | -.1 |
| Metropolitan 2/ | 18.8 | 13.7 | 37.2 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 15.6 | 18.0 |
| Nonmetropolitan | 6.8 | 6.8 | -.5 | -1.4 | -1.6 | -20.9 | -23.3 |

1/ Net migration as a percentage of population at beginning of decade.
2/ Metropolitan areas as defined in 1969 for the 1960-70 data and 1963 for 1950-60 data.
3/ Less than 500,000.

predominantly young adult migrants. However, in the context of the 1950's, when 5.5 million net nonmetro-to-metro migration took place the movement of the 1960's was much reduced.

The increase of 6.7 percent in population in nonmetro areas in the 1960's was the product of a 19.3 percent increase in nonfarm people heavily offset by a 36.0 percent decline in farm population. Thus the nonfarm population in nonmetro areas was actually increasing more rapidly than the population of the U.S. as a whole (13.3 percent), and considerably above the growth it would have had from natural increase alone. The rapidity of growth of the nonfarm population outside of metro areas has not been widely recognized. Its growth has been fostered by a higher rate of nonagricultural job growth (nongovernment wage and salary jobs) than the metro areas have attained. From 1959-69, nonagricultural wage and salary jobs covered by the Social Security system increased by 39 percent in nonmetro areas compared with 34 percent in metro areas. The nonmetro growth rate was especially higher in manufacturing jobs. The job growth rates have been high in completely rural counties as well as in those with urban places of up to 50,000 people. So long as equally rapid declines in farm employment were taking place, the nonagricultural growth resulted in little or no population increase. But with agricultural employment now much diminished, further gains in nonagricultural jobs cannot as readily be offset and will translate more directly into population retention.

Geographic trends.--Rural and nonmetropolitan trends have varied widely from one region to another. The nation is simply too large and diverse for national averages to typify all areas. About 1,355 counties declined in


POPULATION CHANGE, 1960-70
%CHANGE
20
10
0
-10
-20
-30
U.S. TOTAL
TOTAL METRO
TOTAL NONMETRO
NONMETRO NONFARM
NONMETRO FARM
13.3
16.6
6.7
19.3
36.0
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NEG. ERS 8491-71(10) ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

Population change 1960-70, and private nonfarm wage and salary employment change 1959-69, by rurality of counties in 1960

| Rurality of counties, 1960 1/ | Population | | Employment | | Percentage change | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1970 | 1960 | 1969 | 1959 | Population 1960-70 | Jobs 1959-69 |
| | Thou. | Thou. | Thou. | Thou. | Pct. | Pct. |
| U.S. total | 203.2 | 179.3 | 55.9 | 41.3 | 13.3 | 35.3 |
| Entirely rural | 8.2 | 8.2 | 1.0 | .7 | .1 | 45.5 |
| 70-99.9 | 14.6 | 13.8 | 2.4 | 1.7 | 6.5 | 42.2 |
| 50-69.9 | 27.2 | 24.5 | 5.6 | 3.9 | 10.8 | 42.3 |
| 30-49.9 | 30.2 | 26.1 | 7.2 | 5.1 | 15.6 | 40.7 |
| 1-29.9 | 122.9 | 106.7 | 39.7 | 29.9 | 15.2 | 32.8 |

1/ Counties grouped by percentage of population classified as rural in 1960.

Source: 1970 and 1960 Censuses of Population; 1959 and 1969 County Business Patterns.

population, or about 44 percent of all counties. The major concentration of losing counties was in the Great Plains -- both north and south -- where farms decreased and nonagricultural development lagged. Other areas of substantial decline included the heart of the Southern Appalachian Coal Fields, the Mississippi Delta, the Alabama Black Belt, and the western Corn Belt.

On the other hand, there was a major reversal of former population losses in a nonmetropolitan area extending over northern and western Arkansas, eastern Oklahoma, and southwestern Missouri. Here a combination of industrial activity, resort and retirement developments around dam reservoirs, the Arkansas River navigation project, and active State and local leadership halted a previous heavy outmovement from a rural and small city area of below average income and education. Other essentially rural areas that showed much improvement in population retention in the 1960's include the lower Tennessee Valley, west central Kentucky, the Pacific Coast of Washington, the western slope of the Rockies in Colorado, and the northern half of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

Race.--If the inquiries made to the Economic Research Service of the Department of Agriculture are any gauge, metropolitan areas are most concerned about selected streams of migration that they have received from the countryside, in particular, Southern Blacks, Mexican Americans, and Southern Appalachian whites. During the 1960's,the major trend in nonmetro migration from the South was its diminished volume over prior years. Nonmetro areas of the South had 1.5 million net outmovement in the 1960's compared with 4.3 million in the 1950's. But a look at the racial makeup of this reduction shows that it was practically all white. Black and other nonwhite races outmovement declined only from 1,568,000 to 1,346,000, but white net outmovement nearly ceased for the region as a whole, going from 2,686,000 in the 1950's to just 123,000 in the 1960's.

The rate of loss of black farm population was especially heavy in the 1960's, because of the nearly complete mechanization of cotton, and a steady trend of displacement from tobacco farming. But whereas the growth of nonagricultural jobs in the South appears to have had a marked retentive effect on the nonmetro white population, it had comparatively little effect on the black population. Economic development is certainly a necessary condition if rural blacks wish to remain in their home areas, but it has obviously not been a sufficient condition. Over 240 nonmetropolitan counties in the South have had net outmigration of blacks while simultaneously experiencing net inmigration of whites. Although problems of black access to and qualification for the new jobs may be present, it also seems clear that there is a strong impetus to the outmovement of rural blacks that transcends local economic trends.

Migration trends of Mexican-Americans cannot be precisely measured. However, most of the rural counties in which they comprise a major part of the population have typcially had heavy outmigration, often greater than that of the 1950's.

Rural migrants in the cities.--Plea for policies to retard rural-urban migration often state or imply that rural-urban migrants are disproportionately in poverty or on welfare, or that such migration is the cause of urban problems. A recent example can be cited from the House

of Representatives report on the proposed Rural Development Act of 1972:

> There are many.....disparities between rural and urban America. The crux of the problem is that the generally poor conditions in rural America have led to the many chronic problems existing now in the poorer areas of our cities.*

The only source of national information on the number and characteristics of rural-urban migrants is the 1967 Survey of Economic Opportunity. Data from this survey show about 18 million adults (17 years old and over) who were of rural childhood origin and who were living in 1967 in an urban place at least 50 miles from their place of origin. They comprised about 21 percent of the total urban adult population, and thus had added appreciably to the size of the urban population. But despite a somewhat below average educational attainment and a disproportionately elderly age structure, their median family incomes were only 9 percent lower than those of urban native families.

The incidence of poverty among the rural-urban migrant families was 10.8 percent compared with 8.3 percent among urban native families. But the median incomes were much higher and the incidence of poverty much lowered among rural people in the city than among people still in rural areas. Family incomes of rural-urban migrants were 28 percent higher than those of rural residents, and the 10.8 percent poverty incidence compared with 20.2 percent in the countryside. Thus the major point of importance seems to be the higher economic status of rural people in the city as compared with those still in the rural areas, rather than in the deficiency of income between the rural-urban migrants and the urban natives. Furthermore, among blacks -- the population whose income levels

*House of Representatives, Report No. 92-835, Rural Development Act of 1972, p. 2.

are lowest and poverty incidence highest -- the rural-urban migrant families showed no disproportionate incidence of low-income and poverty at all. Rural-urban migrant black families had a median income of $5,116 vs. $5,105 for black urban natives, and 26.6 percent in poverty against 26.9 percent among urban black natives. The overall differential in income and poverty between rural-urban migrants and urban natives was a product of differences in the white population, not in the black.

The proportion of rural-urban migrant families that received some income from public assistance was 5.5 percent, compared with 3.7 percent of urban native families. Thus rural migrant families did have a somewhat higher incidence of dependence on welfare income than did other urban families, but not to a major degree. They comprised only 30 percent of the urban welfare caseload, and a slightly lower incidence of welfare dependence than was found among people still in rural areas (6.4 percent).

In short, rural people have contributed to urban population congestion and poverty and welfare dependence, but in large part only through their numbers. There has been comparatively little disproportionate incidence of these problems among rural-urban migrants, and especially not among blacks where such a relationship is often popularly assumed.

Premises relating to nonmetropolitan economic development.--At the risk of some exaggeration, one might say that a common contention of urban oriented economists has been that (1) nonmetro areas cannot get much economic development because of the economies of scale and aggregation that favor metro locations, and (2) they don't need it, on the grounds that the overwhelming majority of nonmetro people live within commuting distance of metropolitan cities. But as noted above, economies of scale notwithstanding, rural counties have been obtaining nonagricultural jobs at a rate superior to that of metro areas. How long this can continue is unanswered. Certainly it is easier to grow at a rapid percentage rate from a low base number than it is from a large base, and it remains to be seen whether the nonmetro areas can continue their nonagricultural development pace. But the growth they have had in the 1960's was essentially unpredicted by economists and reversed the pattern of inferior growth found in them during the 1950's.

The impression of nearly universal ability to commute has been based largely on a widely published statistic that 87 percent of the U.S. population (in 1960) lived within the commuting fields of metro central cities. * This statistic implied that only about 23 million people -- or about 38 percent of the nonmetro total -- lived in areas where independent planning and economic development were required. For the rest, the purported access to metro centers was presumably the central and sufficient feature of their future development.

*Brian J. L. Berry, Peter G. Goheen, and Harold Goldstein, Metropolitan Area Definition: A Re-Evaluation of Concept and Statistical Practice. Working Paper 28, Bureau of the Census, 1968, p.19.

The difficulty with this statistic is that it defines commuting fields by connecting the most distant points from which any commuting was recorded -- going out even 100 miles or more from the central cities. It does not insist that a meaningful amount of commuting has occurred. Areas within the field may have less than 1 percent of their workers commuting. Around any city one can find a few people living at a considerable distance who commuted during the census week in question. But because such commuting may reflect temporary arrangements or field trips, or involve a few exceptional individuals who can tolerate long distance commuting, it may have no implication that the community as a whole has or could develop an important daily economic linkage with the central city. The same 1960 Census data reveal that 40 million people (2/3 of the total nonmetro population) lived in counties from which less than 5 percent of the workers commuted to <u>any</u> metro destination -- central city or otherwise. This would seem to indicate that for the majority of nonmetro areas, future demographic development cannot be assumed to be closely linked to or a product of planning for metropolitan areas.

A third premise recurrently encountered is that such development as nonmetro areas do get is essentially of a marginal, hand-me-down, low-wage nature that the community would be better off without and that might impede desirable outmigration. That nonmetro wage levels are lower on the average than metro wages is indisputable. Metro families had a median 1969 income more than a fourth higher than that of nonmetro families ($10,261 vs. $7,982). But in the examples given above of nonmetro areas experiencing population turnarounds, it is not just a retention

of local people or an inmovement of retired people not dependent on the local economy that has taken place. In the Ozark-Ouachita area, for example, a net inmigration rate of about 25 percent occurred among people 35-39 years old in 1970. These people, who were 25-29 years old at the beginning of the decade, are comparatively young. But they have already been elsewhere and apparently have found elsewhere lacking in comparison with the totality of the social and economic environment of the Ozark-Ouachita area. And they have done so during a period of high employment and prosperity elsewhere. This type of choice should not lightly be discounted. We do not know as yet just where such inmigrants have come from or why they have moved into the area. But the overall opportunities and living qualities in this particular nonmetro environment seem to appeal to them.

Effects of population decline on rural areas.--The effects of substantial population decline on rural communities have been given very little research attention. The demographic effects are the most obvious. In areas of no more than average family size and where outmovement is highly concentrated among young adults, the age structure of the remaining population becomes very distorted. This has been the general case in the central United States. The median age of the population rises steadily -- often now exceeding age 40. People aged 65 and over become as much as 20 percent of the entire population, compared with a national average of 10 percent. Births diminish and the school system becomes one of contracting enrollment. Deaths begin to exceed births, because the number of older people among whom most deaths occur is so much larger than the

number of childbearing-age adults, and the county begins to decline in population from natural decrease as well as outmigration. Some 355 counties had more deaths than births in 1967, the last year for which figures are available, and the number is increasing.

Nondemographic effects are more presumptive. With declining population, the per capita costs of providing public services probably rise, for they are generally higher in counties of small population. The older average age of the voting population may exert a restraining influence on local government initiative, especially in relation to expenditures based on property taxes. The ability of certain types of business to survive or prosper is impaired and the range of goods and services available locally will lessen. A momentum of outmigration among the young is established that may be hard to break. Even if the economic factors that originally induced outmigration reach a stage of adjustment, the structure of the community may be so altered and pervasive of aging and decline that it is unattractive to the young. Self respect and the esteem of peers may be unattainable for normally ambitious young people without migration.

In rural areas of comparatively high childbearing and/or where outmigration continues into middle age, the age structure of the community is not so altered. This has been characteristic of predominantly black counties in the South, or of many Southern Coal Field counties and Indian and Mexican American areas. Contrary to common notion, these areas may have a young median age (e.g. less than 23 years) and no abnormal proportion of elderly people, despite very high outmigration rates. So much of the outmovement has been offset by large families among the population remaining.

Such counties continue to have high potential labor force replacement. Their advantage for economic development may be an adequate albeit

commonly under-educated potential labor supply, whereas the typical Central Plains county may have a well-educated, work-oriented, but very short supply of workers.

These comments on effects of rural population loss are necessarily sketchy, from the lack of available research on the subject. Population loss may or may not have detrimental effects on an area's prospects. The declines normally are rational responses to serious local economic deficiences in employment and income. Net detrimental effects are most likely to be found in areas where (1) the population base was not large to begin with, (2) the outmovement has been extensive and (3) the effect has been to produce a highly abnormal age structure with small populations per square mile or per governmental unit. Such areas are numerous in the western half of the Nation.

The role of rural fertility in national population growth.--Average family size in rural areas has been higher than that of urban areas. In particular, most of the concentrations of very high fertility in the U.S. have been in rural areas, especially among Southern Negroes, the Southern Appalachian Coal Fields population, Mexican Americans, and Indians. Families engaged in farming -- whether as operators or hired workers -- have averaged large families by modern standards. Because so many urban people have not borne children beyond the replacement level, a disproportionate share of the childbearing that has produced generational population growth in the U.S. has come from rural people. In 1960, rural women 35-44 years old comprised only 27 percent of all women this age in the U.S., but they had contributed 66 percent of the childbearing from this cohort that was above replacement needs and that had

Total children ever born and children born in excess of the number needed for parental replacement for women 35-44 years old in 1960, for the United States by urban-rural residence

| Residence | Women | | Children ever born | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent distribution | Number | Per 1,000 women | Needed for parental replacement per 1,000 women | In excess of replacement need: Per 1,000 women | Number | Percent distribution |
| | Thou. | | Thou. | | | | Thou. | |
| Urban | 8,988 | 73 | 20,351 | 2,264 | 2,084 | 180 | 1,618 | 34 |
| Rural | 3,348 | 27 | 10,058 | 3,004 | 2,084 | 920 | 3,080 | 66 |

Source: 1960 Census, Women by Number of Children Ever Born, Table 1.

population, the disproportionate contribution of rural people to generational population growth in the Nation may be maintained despite the declining proportion of people who reside in rural areas. There is a suggestion of this in the data thus far available. In the 11 months for which data are available since the fertility rate tipped downward in January 1971, the well-publicized drop in births has been limited to the Northeast (except northern New England) the North Central Region, the Pacific States, and that part of the South north of the Potomac River. In the rest of the country births continued to increase. In the declining regions the population is 22 percent rural; in the regions of continuing birth increases it is 36 percent rural. Thus the differential contribution of the more rural areas to national fertility does not seem to be ended.

Qualitative issues in population distribution.--It is difficult to get a definitive view of the balance of advantages and disadvantages that rural and small-town areas have for retention of a significant fraction of the Nation's people and of the relative quality of life possible in them. Objectively, it is possible to say that the average levels of incomes are lower than in cities (as noted earlier), but there are not fully adequate measurements to indicate how much of this differential is offset -- if any -- by lowered costs of living. Rural and small town areas do often lack ready access to medical services and certain cultural facilities. The overall quality of their school systems is taken to be below average, if only because of the lower per capita revenues available for their support. The incidence of substandard housing is greater.

Various measurements also indicate people in rural areas to be more conservative in political and religious attitudes. But whether this is good or bad becomes a matter of individual opinion.

Whatever the real or potential constraints on quality of life in such areas, a majority of our national population consistently indicates a preference to live in a small town or rural setting. The Gallup Poll results are the best known of such surveys, but essentially the same findings have been reported from other sources, including a special survey conducted for the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. The notion may be nostalgic, it may be based partly on ignorance of actual rural conditions, but it is real. Perhaps it primarily reflects a dissatisfaction by urban residents with some of the basic conditions of the urban environment. But there is a widely held view by city people that rural areas and small towns are better places in which to rear children. The widespread concern in recent years over problems of delinquency, drug use, and alienation may well have heightened the view of the desirability of rural/small town life. Rural areas are also viewed as safer, and having less tension, and the people deemed to be more congenial.

Zuiches and Fuguitt have found that in Wisconsin the indicated desire to live in a rural or small town area is really a preference for such a residence within 30 miles of a "large city".* But no probe was made as to whether this proximity was a condition of the rural/small town preference or simply a secondary aspect of it.

The entire question of residential preferences is not yet well understood. We do not really know how serious people are in their somewhat

*James J. Zuiches and Glenn V. Fuguitt, Residential Preferences: Implications for Population Redistribution in Nonmetropolitan Areas. Unpublished paper presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, December 28, 1971. Philadelphia, Pa.

astounding stated degree of preference for small towns and rural areas. Would city people holding this view be willing, for example, to take a lower income as a condition of attaining a change in residence? On the average, this would seem to be necessary at present.

The force of metropolitanism that has led to the present concentration of people is obviously very powerful. But in a democracy, if twice as many people lived in metro urbanized areas as appear to want to, can this consideration be ignored in national population distribution policy, even if it may conflict with the trend of concentration that has occurred in the essentially unguided play of the market place?

It must not be thought that migration between rural and urban areas has been one directional. Although national attention has been focused on migration from rural areas, many people of urban origin have moved to rural and small town localities over the years. In 1967, 20 percent of the adult rural nonmetropolitan population was of urban origin, representing more than 5 million people. On the average, they are considerably younger than are urban people of rural origin, and they supply a substantial proportion of persons engaged in professional, managerial, or other white-collar occupations in rural communities.

Summary

1. There is great diversity in the structure and trends of rural and/or nonmetro populations in the U.S. This must be recognized if intelligent policies toward population distribution and its accompanying incentives are to be developed. Some rural areas are absorbing

their population growth and have natural and economic advantages for development. Others, such as the Great Plains or the Southern tobacco areas are still in the midst of agricultural adjustments that will reduce their population further. These areas are too huge to be ignored. Rational planning for the future of these areas is needed, whether the prospects for future population retention are good or poor.

2. Outmigration from rural areas has been necessary and rational. Most migrants believe they benefitted themselves by moving. However, a momentum of outmigration builds up among young adults in some rural areas that is difficult to halt even after the original causes are no longer operative. A community may need help to cope with the distortions of age structure and lowered community size brought by rapid outmovement and to break the momentum of outmovement.

3. The rate of nonagricultural job growth in rural and/or nonmetropolitan areas has been higher than that in the rest of the country since 1959. This point is not widely recognized. Because the agricultural employment base is now much diminished, further nonagricultural job increases would translate more readily into overall population retention in the 1970's and beyond than was the case in earlier years. In addition, the long and rapid drop in coal mining employment -- which has been the major single source of population displacement in the heart of the Appalachians -- has ceased in the last two years and is unlikely to be a factor in future population distribution trends.

4. There is little prospect of <u>substantially</u> altering the urban-

rural distribution of population in the nation -- at least in our time. But there is a need to recognize the actual possibilities for greater population retention that many nonmetro areas now have, or will have when their agricultural adjustments are a little further advanced. And they should not be penalized by population distribution policies that favor only metropolitan locations.

5. Rural fertility has contributed greatly to U.S. total population growth and deserves more attention in family planning services if national population control objectives are to be achieved.

6. Both rural and urban areas have advantages and disadvantages for quality of life. Views as to which environment is superior are judgmental and ages old in origin. The nation will continue to be predominantly urban, but millions of its people prefer the smaller-scale environment of rural and small city places and should be provided a reasonable chance to exercise this preference, whether it is in a distinctly nonmetro location or on the periphery of a metro area.